

The Baptist Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

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Evangelicals in Bulgaria complain of harassment

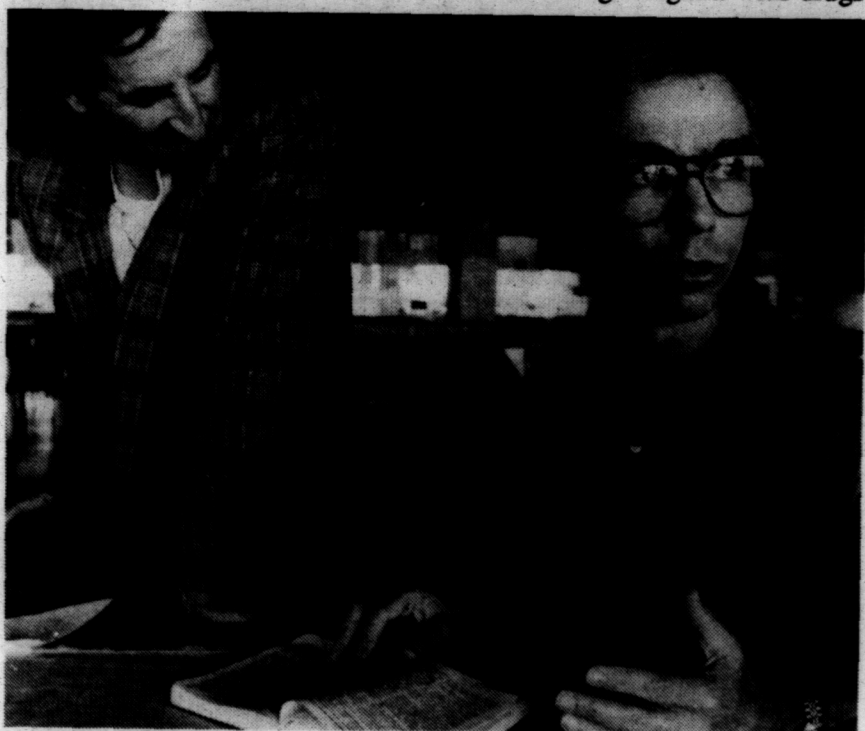
SOFIA, Bulgaria (ABP) — Another former communist country is locked in an internal struggle over how much religious freedom to allow.

This time it's Bulgaria, an East Europe country of 9 million people located on the Black Sea. Bulgaria emerged from communist rule in 1989 and, like most post-communist countries, established religious liberty for its citizens.

But the influx and growth of religions competing with the dominant Orthodox Church has produced tension and calls for new restrictions. Evangelical Chris-

tians, including Baptists, say they are the targets of a harassment campaign conducted by the Orthodox Church and abetted by the government.

According to Theo Angelov, president of the Baptist Union of Bulgaria, evangelicals and even mainline Protestants are lumped together with less traditional religions under the derisive heading of "sects," even though some of those traditional faith groups have been around for more than 100 years. Government leaders accuse the sects of bribery, brainwashing, and infecting Bulgaria with drugs



ONCE COMMUNIST CENTER, NOW BIBLE SCHOOL — In facilities where Bulgarians once studied communist theory, Baptists now study the Bible. Here missionary Bill Wardlaw (right) of the Foreign Mission Board and Baptist pastor Damyan Podgorski discuss a Scripture passage with others during lunch.



ARISE TO NEW LIFE — Missionary Bill Wardlaw of the Foreign Mission Board baptizes a young believer in Bulgaria as 14-year-old Georgi Gurdev (right) waits his

turn. Kazanluk Baptist Church, site of this baptism service, is the oldest Baptist church in Bulgaria. (BP photo by Warren Johnson)

and organized crime, according to the European Baptist Press Service.

New laws that give preference to the Orthodox Church and restrict other faith groups have been proposed by Christopher Subev, chairman of the parliament's committee for religions.

Already some non-Orthodox churches have been denied building permits and others forced to vacate government-owned buildings.

James Duke, an American serving as pastor of an English-speaking Baptist congregation in Sofia, was told to leave Bulgaria by Dec. 3. Efforts to obtain long-term visas for James and his wife, Audrey, have been futile.

The Dukes, Southern Baptists, have been working with the Sofia congregation since March. Between 70 and 120 internationals meet for worship every week in a hotel in the capital city.

A report by the Helsinki Com-

mission earlier this year found considerably more religious freedom in post-communist Bulgaria but also noted evangelical complaints about visa problems, proposed restrictions, and media attacks "that have confused their churches with foreign non-Christian sects."

The number of Baptists in Bulgaria reportedly has tripled since the fall of communism. Baptists now claim 3,000 members in 30 churches.

Playing hooky

Americans don't go to church as much as they think they do, according to a new study by sociologist Kirk Hadaway, who became intrigued by Gallup Polls that indicated church attendance in the U.S. held steady over the last 40 years even though many denominations were reporting declines in attendance. Hadaway's research, which tracked church attendance in a test area of the Midwest, found that not as many people were in church as Gallup reported, indicating that people were giving themselves more credit than they deserved when pollsters asked them about their church attendance. Why?

Church attendance

42%

20%

Gallup

Hadaway

"People value religion in American society, and many Americans tend to see themselves as religious people, but often their actual behavior does not fit their own perception of themselves as an every week churchgoer," Hadaway observed.

Albanians teach "Jesus"

An International School Project convocation in Tirana, capital of the formerly atheist nation of Albania, was attended by nearly 500 Albanian teachers who heard 70 educators from six western countries explain a curriculum that includes Bible-based, Christian foundations of morals and ethics. The teachers also had an opportunity to view the "Jesus" film during the meeting. Although Albania was officially atheist by edict of the now-deceased dictator Enver Hoxha, government officials screened the film shortly after Hoxha's death and asked that it be shown to the youth of Albania. The teachers received a translated set of the Christian curriculum in use in many of the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (formerly the Soviet Union) as well as a Bible and an Albanian "Jesus" video. At the close of the four-day event, 48% of the teachers wrote that they trusted Jesus Christ as Savior for the first time. In addition, 15% indicated they had reconfirmed their commitment to Christ during the convocation, reflecting the fact that many Albanians worshipped despite official prohibition.

Looking Back...

10 years ago

The Baptist Sunday School Board (BSSB) honors Mississippian Arthur Flake, recognized as the architect of the modern BSSB, with a special service and memorial plaque in his home church, First Church, Winona.

20 years ago

Editors of the four largest denominational publications in Mississippi, including *The Baptist Record*, band together and announce an editorial drive to remove drunk drivers from the state's highways.

50 years ago

J.D. Franks Sr., pastor of First Church, Columbus, receives a letter from his wartime aviator son, J.D. Jr., describing the love and pride that he has for his father and family. The letter was mailed by a fellow aviator after the younger Franks was killed while bombing German oil fields.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Guy Henderson

Excited over the wrong thing

There is a tremendous amount of excitement over public school prayer at the moment, but is the excitement channeled to the proper place?

Students can pray any time they want to pray. Groups gather early and pray around flag poles, some pray over their lunches, and some wit noted there would always be prayer in school as long as they have tests.

We have to admire the students at Wingfield High School in Jackson for their energy and zeal over school prayer, but are we really excited about the main thing?

There are people who believe that having all religions (Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.) praying publicly in our schools would be better than no religion at all having this privilege. There are others who maintain that no religion publicly praying is better than the confusion of all religions.

Unfortunately, there are others who see prayer as a religious rabbit's foot which will work wonders over violence, drugs, and immorality if we can get it, voluntarily or by force, into the

public schools.

Let's get excited over the real thing. Christ Jesus is needed in the individual lives of all people — then the individual can pray any time, anywhere. To get an anemic, watered-down prayer, perfunctorily read over a public address system, will not accomplish this purpose.

It is so easy to forget the main reason for existence. We have a golden opportunity to witness concerning the saving power of Christ. Christian students are encouraged to give a clear testimony of Christ and his power to save. There are many ramifications in the Wingfield matter upon which Christians will not likely agree. We should agree to keep it on a legal basis, and to be Christian in our conduct.

Multitudes of religions and denominations would never agree on the prayer, and it would not stand up in court if it favors one group. Win or lose, little will be accomplished when one religion is favored over another. This is neither the time nor place to fight this battle.

There is a secular world out there which desires to root religion out of the public schools. Christians need to stand up and say, "We will not let this take place!"

Schools are begging for volunteers to assist in academic life, in athletics, and other allied organizations such as the PTA. In these, we can let our light shine in darkness, bearing a testimony of what true prayer is all about.

Wingfield students have made us aware of all this. Shouting matches, obscene language, loud accusations, and running down another's belief are not the best Christian witness.

Let's obey the law or work to change it. Let's be busy in the main task of being followers of Jesus Christ seven days a week, taking constructive action to make our schools the best.

In this situation the fruit of the Spirit — love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, and faith — exhibited in the lives of Christian students, are more valuable than having a government-approved prayer read over a public address system.

Romanian professor knows hardship, triumph of faith

By Brian Smith

FORT WORTH — As an engineering student at the University of Bucharest, Otniel Bunaciu stood in a small room, face to face with interrogators from the Communist Youth Organization. "So you believe in God? How can you be so stupid?"

It was in the early 1980s in Romania. Nicolae Ceausescu was in power. The secret police owned the streets.

Bunaciu withstood the ridicule. "They made fun of you, but you were forced to stand up for your faith," he said.

For Bunaciu, visiting guest professor at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth this fall, and other Christians in communist Romania, life wasn't easy.

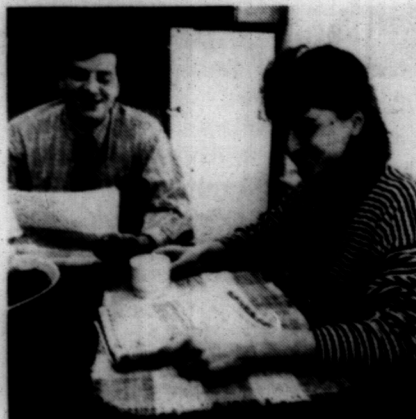
He remembers when the secret police raided the Bucharest Theological Seminary, where his father was president. Bunaciu said police confiscated and burned all the Bibles they found. When the seminary's building was damaged in an earthquake, they weren't allowed to rebuild. Enrollment was limited to as few as four students per year.

Bunaciu's background, coupled with a theology degree from Oxford University, offers South-

western students an uncommon perspective.

"He's teaching an area that he's uniquely qualified in," said Steve Lemke, associate professor of philosophy and religion. "He's been inside as a Romanian and outside as a student in England, so he has a perspective that few people have."

Lemke and Bunaciu became friends when Lemke and other professors traveled to Romania to teach pastors. Fluent in German and English, Bunaciu, who has a degree in mechanical engineering, served as a translator for many of the foreign missionaries who came to Romania.



Otniel and Camelia Bunaciu

"Through interpreting, I felt God drawing me closer to the ministry. I eventually decided to choose ministry over engineering," he said.

He maintained both his engineering career and his translating duties until the opportunity for theological study in England arose. In 1985, the Foreign Mission Board offered to sponsor him at Oxford. But the communist regime refused to let him leave Romania. He applied for a study visa, but for three years he received no answer.

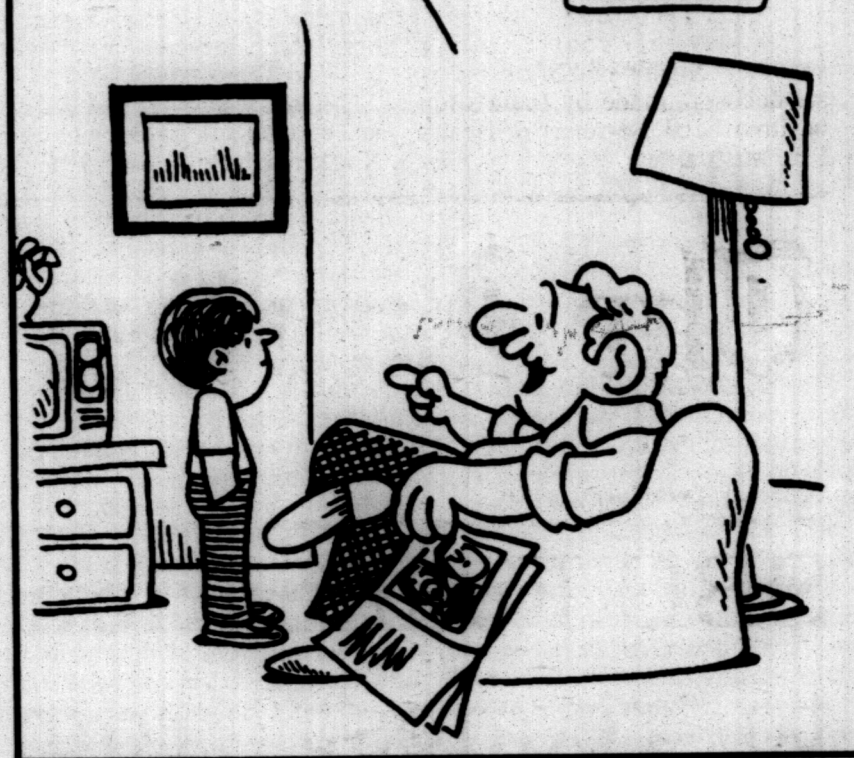
"I finally got a 30-day tourist visa," he said. "I went out on that and didn't return, even though it was technically illegal to stay without a permit."

Bunaciu considers it "providential" that Ceausescu was overthrown during Bunaciu's final year at Oxford.

Relieved to be able to return to Bucharest, Bunaciu, known as "Oti" to his friends, took full advantage of the new freedoms democracy allowed. He accepted a position teaching at the seminary in Bucharest. He rode the overnight train two nights a week in order to teach at the new semi-

"NO, I DON'T CARE TO HEAR YOUR TESTIMONY OF SUFFERING IN A HOSTILE WORLD — GO DO YOUR HOMEWORK!"

JOE MCKEEVER



THE FRAGMENTS

Broadening the tent

Being on a nominating committee has seldom been a piece of cake. The tendency is to go with whom you know... and in most cases, this will be with your friends. Maybe the process of nomination should be approached with more concern for the total organization. Information on unknown people can be garnered from the directors of missions, convention officers, or from various church leaders.

There are over 2,000 pastors, evangelists, directors of missions, chaplains, and other ordained personnel in the Magnolia State. Probably half of these have never served in state-level office, while many others have served repeatedly as trustees, on committee assignments, or on various boards.

nary in Oradea, in far northwestern Romania. Serving with his father as co-pastor of the Ferentari Baptist Church in Bucharest, he started an English language course as a way to attract people to the church.

"Naturally, we use the Bible, and we've been able to reach a lot of people for Christ," he said.

Through the English class, Bunaciu met his wife, a young Christian pharmacist named Camelia. They were married just a few weeks before arriving at

Most of this number would agree that more preachers and staff members need to be involved on the various committees of our convention. Also, lay persons have served and are serving magnificently in a number of significant areas.

Jerry Clower told the preachers of the SBC, "There are only 35,000 of y'all and there are 15,000,000 of us." Remember the ratio when someone is nominated.

A.L. Goodrich popularized the phrase, "Folks are down on what they are not up on." Broader, more representative committees will widen the knowledge of our conventions and institutions. Finally brethren, be assured that whatever you do, it will not please everyone in the convention. — GH

Southwestern.

Even though they don't think of being in the United States as their honeymoon, they are excited about being here. "America... is like the land where milk and honey and cars and McDonald's just flow," he said.

As much as Bunaciu enjoys being in the States, he is committed to returning to the challenges of ministry in Romania. He will return to Bucharest in January.

Smith is PR writer, Southwestern Seminary, Fort Worth.

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Missionary surgeon Naylor regains India medical license

By Donald D. Martin

BANGALORE, India (BP) — Southern Baptist missionary doctor Rebekah Naylor officially regained her Indian medical license Nov. 25 following a surprise overruling of the Indian national medical council, which denied her a license last October.

"I was of course rather stunned," Naylor said of the reversal decision, made by India's top health official, Secretary of Health R.L. Mishra.

Naylor, a surgeon from Fort Worth, and the only Southern Baptist missionary living in India, first learned of the decision in a Nov. 12 meeting with Mishra in Delhi. But she couldn't practice medicine or comment publicly until she received official notification, which arrived — appropriately — on Thanksgiving Day.

Mishra also overruled the medical council's decision not to grant Naylor a license in 1991. The

council's 1991 decision, as well as the October ruling, made it illegal for Naylor to practice medicine at Bangalore Baptist Hospital, where she has worked since 1973.

The 143-bed hospital treats more than 74,000 patients a year. About half of them are too poor to pay their medical bills.

The 1991 overruling came only after a U.S. senator, India's ambassador in Washington, and Southern Baptist pastors in Ken-

tucky interceded in Naylor's behalf.

The good news falls short of total victory, however, because the new license is good for only one year.

"It's a big problem. Last time they gave two years and this time they've only given one year. And the medical council has told us that they were very negative about future (renewals)," the missionary doctor said.

A renewal next year appears even more doubtful since Mishra will retire from his position as health secretary in early 1994. Naylor already has begun inquiring if there is a way to extend the new license to two years.

"I'm still very relieved and I'm very grateful, but at the same time it's not freedom from this burden," she admitted. "I'm kind of on borrowed time."

Martin writes for FMB.

THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

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SBC Foundation responds to "request" from Annuity

By Herb Hollinger

NASHVILLE (BP) — Trustees of the Foundation heard reports of asset growth and record income produced for investments of Baptist institutions and agencies, but voted overwhelmingly to seek dialogue with a sister SBC agency which is requesting authority for an investment management program.

Meeting in Nashville Nov. 30 and Dec. 1 in annual session, the 34 trustees were a bit shocked and apprehensive upon learning the SBC Annuity Board had requested a change in its program assignment to include an investment management service. The Annuity Board request, sent to the SBC Executive Committee this fall, basically would give the Annuity Board the right to "provide investment programs and related services that meet the needs of the SBC, its agencies, and any other Baptist body, Baptist institution, or individual."

In a nutshell, that's what the Foundation has been doing since its charter in 1947 as an SBC agency.

As one trustee told Baptist Press, "It's like the David and Goliath story in the Old Testament!" (David being the Foundation and Goliath the Annuity Board.)

The difference in the size of the two SBC agencies is staggering: the Annuity Board has \$4 billion in assets, the Foundation has \$158 million; the Annuity Board produces more than \$1 million in income per day, the Foundation had \$10 million last year; the Annuity Board has 24 managers of various investment funds, the Foundation has three income funds.

And, Donald H. Wills of Dallas, the Annuity Board representative on the Foundation board of trustees, told the group the Annu-

ity Board proposal could produce a controversy, "we, as Southern Baptists, don't need."

"We will both lose," Wills said, "although some competition may be good, I don't know." He said the Annuity Board might could do the investment managing with "less overhead" and "higher returns."

Wills suggested the Foundation enter into dialogue with the Annuity Board, even as far as putting the presidents of the two agencies in a room, "close the door and let them work it out and come out with some kind of agreement." Hollis E. Johnson III is the Foundation president and Paul Powell is president of the Dallas-based Annuity Board.

Contacted by Baptist Press, Thomas E. Miller, senior vice president for public relations at the Annuity Board, said, "Dr. Powell was in contact with Mr. Johnson prior to the meeting of the Foundation trustees. The initial direct contact was made after Dr. Powell sought the counsel of Dr. Morris Chapman (president of the SBC Executive Committee). Dr. Powell requested a meeting with Mr. Johnson and is awaiting an appointment. It would be inappropriate to comment on the Foundation action until the two chief executive officers have met."

"We regret the orderly process of communication has been interrupted by the published excerpts of Foundation trustee discussions. The Annuity Board will not use news media as a method of discussion and negotiation with a sister agency," said Miller.

However, what the Foundation trustees did do, on a motion by Frank C. Ingraham, a member-at-large from Franklin, Tenn., was to authorize Foundation officials to work with the Annuity Board and state convention foundations to

find an agreeable solution. The motion was passed without dissent although Wills asked to have the record note he abstained from voting.

The dialogue, however, would have to include five points the Foundation regards as important: (1) There must be a commitment in the management and investment (See FOUNDATION on page 9)

Foreign Mission Board nixes idea of excess reserve funds

By Robert O'Brien

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — Southern Baptists need to increase their missions giving despite inaccurate reports being circulated that the Foreign Mission Board has all the money it needs in reserve, top board leaders say.

"If such reports were true, we wouldn't have had to cut our home office staff by 37 positions in 1993 because of decreased receipts," said FMB President Jerry Rankin.

Rankin and other top administrators responded after reports circulated at several state Baptist convention meetings this fall that the board has all the money it needs, even if Southern Baptists reduce their contributions.

"Yes, the board does have reserve funds, but they're not nearly enough for an agency like the board with nearly 4,000 missionaries operating on tight budgets all over the world," added Executive Vice President Don Kammerdiener.

Those reserves, plus other funds in temporary investments, have always been disclosed to the public, Rankin said. The board has always reported them regularly to

its trustees and the Southern Baptist Convention. He urged interested Southern Baptists to request such information from the board.

The mission board has \$105 million in endowment and contingency reserves, according to Carl Johnson, FMB vice president for finance and treasurer.

It also typically holds — on a temporary basis — between \$100 million and \$150 million in cash flow funds, budgeted for specific uses, but sent to the mission field as soon as possible.

The board invests all funds it hasn't yet spent to gain additional income for missions, much like local churches that place offerings in interest-bearing accounts until they can be spent.

Investment income goes into the mission board's budget unless a donor directs otherwise. This income makes up 7.3% of the board's 1993 budget.

As of October, that additional money amounted to enough to support 292 missionaries. If the board reduced its investments, Rankin said, it would jeopardize substantial commitment for the

support of missionaries on the field and in retirement.

"Southern Baptists need to continue and increase their gifts if we are to continue to rise to the challenge of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ around the world," he said.

The board's reserve funds include \$80 million in endowment either designated by donors for perpetual investment or undesignated in bequests from their estates. The board gained its greatest growth in endowment in the 1980s, primarily because of high investment returns and bequests. No Lottie Moon Christmas Offering Funds or Cooperative Program funds have ever been added to the endowment, Johnson said.

Rankin said endowment reserves are a common practice among organizations, including SBC agencies, which want to maintain a sound financial base. He said the board's endowment is relatively low, compared to a number of other organizations in the SBC, such as colleges and seminaries.

(See FMB on page 9)

Prague chosen new home of "Ruschlikon"

DIDCOT, England (ABP) — Prague, capital city of the Czech Republic, has been picked as the new site for European Baptists' international seminary.

The executive committee of the European Baptist Federation, meeting in Didcot, England, in late November, gave provisional approval for the Baptist Theological Seminary to move to Prague from its current site in Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

The move is expected to help resolve the financial distress the seminary has suffered since 1991, when the Foreign Mission Board, which founded the school, withdrew all funding because of alleged liberalism. The seminary became a rallying cry for Southern Baptist moderates who accused the FMB of playing politics with the school.

The European Baptist Federation, which now owns the school,

plans to sell or lease the Ruschlikon property to fund the move. The Swiss site, overlooking Lake Zurich, is valued at about \$12 million.

The seminary will have to build its facility in Prague. No date has been set for the move but it is expected to take a couple years to accomplish.

Leaving Ruschlikon is expected to solve at least two problems — the high cost of doing business in Switzerland and the difficulty of getting visas for student families. Students, who come from 23 countries in Europe and beyond, frequently have to leave their families behind in order to study in Switzerland.

And the seminary can be operated in Prague for a fraction of the cost in Switzerland, where students now pay about \$10,000 a year to attend.



Carey students awarded

Two scholarships, administered by the Board of Ministerial Education of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, were presented to recipients during Carey College's chapel service on Oct. 25. Jennifer Shearen of Booneville (above, second from left) received the William Clawson Scholarship; Darren Wigington of Prentiss (right) received the Thurman V. Bryant Memorial Scholarship. With them (left to right) were: Hardy Denham, director of the church-related vocations program at William Carey College; William Clawson, professor emeritus, Carey's Cooper School of Missions; and Mrs. Darren Wigington.

State gifts to CP up, lag pro rata budget

Mississippi Baptists gave \$1,857,914 through the Cooperative Program in November, according to Bill Causey, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board which channels the gifts to the various missions and education causes. This amount is an increase of \$568,824 over that given in November of 1992.

The 1993 total for 11 months is \$19,571,914. This is \$435,707

more than that given for the first 11 months of 1992.

The pro rata budget for 1993 would be \$20,581,000, which is figured by taking the total budget, dividing by 12 and multiplying by the number of months elapsed. This means that gifts so far are \$1,009,020 (or 4.90 percent) under budget. The total 1993 budget is \$22,452,000. The convention voted the same budget for 1994.

Cooperative Program gifts down for month; remain below budget

NASHVILLE (BP) — Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program receipts for the second month of the 1993-94 fiscal year were 6.32% below receipts for the same month last year, according to Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the SBC Executive Committee.

"However," Chapman said, "Cooperative Program receipts increased each month of this fiscal year. The comparison with November 1992 is skewed by the fact that one state convention gave 95% of its total October-November 1992 contribution during the month of November. Now we are comparing a slow growth November 1993 with an abnormally high growth November 1992. Growth for each of the two months of this fiscal year reflects the growing

commitment of churches and state conventions to Southern Baptists' goal of getting the gospel to every person in the world."

The CP gifts for November 1993 totaled \$10,992,852 compared to \$11,734,974 for the same month last year. The monthly requirement for the SBC Program Allocation Budget is \$11,519,561.

For the two months of the fiscal year the CP gifts totaled \$21,872,550 compared to last year of \$22,565,020 or a 3.07% decrease. The two months budget requirement is \$23,039,122 which leaves a deficit of \$1,166,571 or 94.94% of the budget need for the year-to-date.

Designated gifts also were down for the month: \$1,874,230 compared to \$2,384,109 last year, or a 26% decrease.

Churches adopt Expanded Annuity Plan

The following churches have adopted the Expanded Annuity Plan since those reported in the Oct. 10 issue of *The Baptist Record*: Panola: West Batesville; and Pontotoc: Oak Hill.

RTVC president: opportunities in Russia must be acted on now

FORT WORTH (BP) — The president of the SBC's Radio and Television Commission said he was not optimistic about the ability of the Russian people to solve their problems.

Writing in *Russia Update*, a newsletter sent to those interested in Russia, Johnson said, "I'm much more impressed with their patience and persistence than with their performance," said Jack Johnson, who recently made his sixth trip to Russia to arrange for distribution of RTVC radio and television programming.

"Russians have the gift of turning progress into calamity," he said. "The so-called Soviet experiment may be history's longest running and most colossal blunder. Hopefully, the time will come when getting from one day to the next for Russians will no longer require the sort of small miracle that it does today."

Johnson said there is a real

hunger for the gospel in Russia, and that Southern Baptists must move quickly while opportunity permits.

"With the ever-changing political climate in Russia, it's impossible to predict how long the doors will be open to evangelical Christianity," said Johnson. "So we must take every opportunity to spread the gospel there while we can. Someday Russia might become somewhat ordinary, a country of problems rather than catastrophes, a country that develops rather than explodes. But I don't see that day coming anytime soon."

A shipment of 10,000 pounds of candy, 4,000 pairs of mittens, and thousands of gospel tracts for children has been sent to St. Petersburg by First Church of Jackson, along with bags promoting the RTVC's television program "Word of Life," which is telecast weekly there in the former Soviet state. More than 20,000 Christmas bags for children will be given out in St. Petersburg

the week of Jan. 7, which is Christmas in Russia. Each bag has the day and time of the "Word of Life" broadcast printed on it.

Johnson said very few stores in Russia offer free bags, so the bags advertising the program will be used for some time.

"We are doing a lot with a little," said Johnson. "Our international media budget is only \$150,000 and our current revenues for this ministry are less than \$60,000. And we are providing a gospel witness in an area of more than 80 million people."

"The 70 years of Soviet rule have contorted the minds of those who lived through it," said Johnson. "Many, including me, believe that the problems will not be solved until the 'Homo Sovieticus' has passed from the scene. By 'Homo Sovieticus' I mean that person whose whole life was lived under the deception and falsification of the Soviet system."

FACE stalls; fight possible on worship amendment front

By Tom Strode

WASHINGTON (BP) — The Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act will not become law until at least next year.

The Senate and House of Representatives passed different versions of the bill the week before Congress adjourned for the year, but sponsors of the FACE Act ran out of time in their attempt to achieve reconciliation.

Members of a Senate-House conference committee never were named before Congress adjourned Nov. 25. When the Senate and House approve different versions of a bill, a conference committee normally is convened to work out differences.

The conferees will be named in late January, a House staff member said, with the intent of sending the conference version through both houses soon thereafter.

FACE makes a federal offense of the blockading of abortion clinics, as well as vandalism of abortion clinics and violence against clinic personnel. Pro-lifers, including many of those who oppose violence and who do not endorse the blockading of clinics, have attacked FACE as a violation of free-speech rights, while pro-choice advocates have supported it as necessary to protect abortion clinic workers and to ensure women have the right to obtain an abortion.

The House passed the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act Nov. 18 by a voice vote. Two days earlier, the Senate approved the measure by a 69-30 margin. President Bill Clinton has indicated his support for the bill.

A sharp disagreement could arise in the conference committee over a religious liberty amendment offered by Sen. Orrin Hatch, R.-Utah, and adopted by the Senate.

The language in the Senate version provides the same protections from violence and obstruction for those seeking to attend worship services as are guaranteed in the bill for those seeking to enter or working at abortion clinics.

Some pro-life observers have predicted House supporters, buoyed by homosexual and abortion rights activists, will seek to eliminate the Hatch amendment from the conference report. Such may not be the case, others say.

Rep. Charles Schumer, D.-N.Y., and the House's chief sponsor of FACE, has taken no position "one way or the other" on the Hatch language, said Steve Goldstein, staff counsel of a subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee.

Schumer is "very, very respectful of the free exercise of religion and would certainly consider seriously, very seriously, any provision that would protect the free exercise

of religion," Goldstein said. "It's something we're going to have to look at over this recess."

The Christian Life Commission opposed FACE but supports the Hatch amendment. The Baptist Joint Committee has not taken a position on the amendment yet.

"It would be ironic, to say the least, if Sen. Kennedy and Congressman Schumer, as the chief sponsors of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, end up standing in the way of the Hatch amendment," said James A. Smith, the Christian Life Commission's director of government relations.

A concern of some opponents of FACE is it will result in the suppression of legal activities such as sidewalk counseling and picketing. Sponsors of the legislation deny it will apply to such activities.

Strode is director of media and news information, Washington office, CLC.

Missionary in Philippines stabbed during prison riot

AMAS, Philippines (BP) — Southern Baptist missionary Thurmon Braughton was stabbed Nov. 23 during a prison uprising in Amas, Philippines.

As Braughton, from Hot Springs, Ark., and a Christian team from Malaysia held a Bible study in a small prison, several prisoners attempting to escape attacked the visiting Christians.

One of the prisoners, armed with a handgun, grabbed a woman from the Christian team and attempted to take her hostage.

Braughton moved toward the gunman and offered to exchange

places with the woman. When the gunman refused, Braughton grabbed his arm and freed the woman. But as he struggled with the inmate, someone stabbed the missionary.

The flesh wound, just under his ribs, did not damage any vital organs, mission officials said. Braughton, 60, was treated overnight at a local medical facility and released the next day.

Press reports said three of the escaped inmates were killed by government troops. Officials also captured one escaped prisoner, but several others remain free.

Christmas marketing theme cause of Christian concerns

By Mark Wingfield

(ABP) — The average American family will spend \$689 this year on Christmas presents, according to the American Research Group. Although that estimate is down slightly from the \$740 per family spent last year, it's still enough to cause concern among Christian ethicists.

"This is an enormous expenditure for families who could be using their funds for other things," said Al Fritsch, a Jesuit priest and ethicist who studies poverty issues in Appalachia.

While the selling of Christmas has bothered Christians for a long time, by most accounts such commercialization has intensified in recent years. There is a growing concern that consumerism is devouring the Christmas message.

"What drives the commercialization of Christmas is the straight-forward profit motive of businesses," said David Gushee, professor of Christian ethics at Southern Seminary.

"My fear," said Robert Parham, executive director of the Baptist Center for Ethics, "is that church people often don't recognize how heavily saturated the Christmas season is with commercials, which define this high and holy season as a time of high and unholy consumption."

"Commercialism basically distorts the message of the Christmas season," Parham said. "The last time I checked the Christmas story, it was about goodwill, the birth of the Peace Child, God's promise that the impossible is possible, that God loves the world enough to give his own Son."

That gospel message conflicts with the preaching of corporate America, "that human worth is wrapped up in human consumption," Parham said.

"We're getting away from the whole notion of the gift at Christmas," said Fritsch, who directs

Appalachia Science in the Public Interest near London, Ky. "It's gone only into material things."

While Christians have been celebrating Christmas in a variety of ways for at least 1600 years, the commercialization of the season is a relatively new development — beginning about 100 years ago.

In 1941, to aid U.S. businesses, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt moved Thanksgiving Day one week earlier to expand the Christmas shopping season.

The buying-and-selling frenzy has accelerated ever since, Parham said, until now stores start promoting Christmas before Halloween.

"Christians need to have a stance in which they are resistant to allowing the buying and selling emphasis of the Christmas season to take over their entire celebration," Southern Seminary's Gushee added.

Gushee, Parham, and Fritsch offered additional reasons why Christians should be concerned about excessive spending at Christmas:

— Families feel enormous societal pressure to join the buying frenzy. "Many Americans spend themselves into debt based upon the guilt they have over their inability to have a luxurious, materialistic season," Parham said.

— The emphasis on buying fosters greed. "Where it goes off track is in the running with the Joneses and the desire to be bigger and better in terms of what we buy at Christmas," Gushee said. "It's the acquisitiveness, the idea that 'I've got to get all these great gifts or I won't be happy.'"

— The poor are impacted more adversely. "People who already are in miserable economic circumstances have their noses rubbed in it," Gushee said, "because the parents aren't able to provide for their children all the toys they see advertised on television or perhaps

their friends at school are getting."

— Some merchants exploit Christian faith for the purpose of profit. "When do malls invite church choirs to perform?" Parham asked. "Do you ever know of a mall that invited a church choir to come sing at Easter?"

But there is another side to the issue, noted David Proffitt, a bivocational pastor and manager of Martin's department store in Salyersville, Ky.

Christmas may be too commercial, he agreed, but the gifts Americans buy put turkeys on the tables of thousands of retail and manufacturing workers.

Without Christmas sales, the retail industry's goose would be cooked, Proffitt said. "If you don't make it between October and Jan. 1, you won't make it."

Christmas buying accounts for anywhere from 40% to 60% of annual sales for most American retailers, according to industry insiders and economists.

The real problem is not with the products on store shelves but with what's found in the hearts of individuals, he said. "You can buy gifts and give them with a spirit of love, the spirit of Christ, and have nothing wrong at all. On the other hand, you can do all the crass things that are associated with commercialization and make Christmas a sham."

The bottom line for Christians, Gushee said, is to keep the celebration in Christmas.

Wingfield is news director, Kentucky WESTERN RECORDER.

Thursday, December 9, 1993

BAPTIST RECORD PAGE 5



Rankin WMU holds crafts fair

Rankin Association WMU leaders recently presented a check for \$2,000 to state WMU leaders. At a recent crafts fair at the Rankin Association office, women sold crafts, food, quilts, etc., and donated the proceeds to help pay for the WMU Disaster Relief Unit. Pictured (left to right) are: Jan Cossitt, WMU coordinator for disaster relief; Betty Pickering, Rankin Association WMU leader; Marjean Patterson, Mississippi WMU executive director; and Violet Kersh and Lorise Creel, Rankin Association leaders.

"Men's Ministry" plans debuted for state execs

MEMPHIS (BP) — The introduction of "Men Making a Difference" rallies in Memphis and Jacksonville, Fla., early next year is only the first indication the Brotherhood Commission is eager to move ahead with new options for men's ministries, according to agency President James D. Williams.

The "Men Making a Difference" concept made its public debut at a meeting of state convention executive directors at the Brotherhood Commission Dec. 1.

"These rallies are the first indication that the Brotherhood Commission intends to give strong leadership to men's ministry throughout the convention, and provide materials that tie male development issues and other interests of men together with support for global missions," Williams said.

The one-day events, normally scheduled on a Saturday, will begin with a breakfast meeting featuring a widely-known motivational speaker as a "big-name draw," who will speak on how God has made and continues to make a difference in his life, particularly from his perspective as a public figure.

This will be followed by two-hour seminar sessions in the morning and afternoon. Topics for these "Making A Difference" seminars will include parenting, marital relationships, the Christian man as a business leader, and ministering during the retirement years.

In October, Brotherhood Commission trustees approved changes in the agency's program statement allowing the agency wider latitude in developing programs and products for Southern Baptist men and boys. The SBC Executive Committee will consider the new statement in February.

The statement gives more attention to Brotherhood's role in helping church members, primarily men and boys, to develop their personal missions involvement while retaining existing Brotherhood programs such as Royal Ambassadors and Baptist Men.

The introduction of plans for men's ministry is the first evidence of the proposed change in the program statement, which must be approved by the Executive Committee and then by the Southern Baptist Convention in June 1994.



New Work Fellowship

The 1994 officers for the New Work Fellowship are (left to right): Peggy Huey, secretary; Marc Howard, program chairman; Walter Ballard, vice president; and J.C. Prather, president. The New Work Fellowship will meet three times a year (during the Evangelism Conference, the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board meeting, and host one event) to provide information, fellowship, and training. It is open to persons who are presently involved in work which is no more than two years old. For more information, contact the Cooperative Missions Department, MBCB, (601) 968-3800.

Suggestions for avoiding commercialized Christmas

(ABP) — Are you determined to avoid the excessive commercialization of Christmas? Here are 10 practical tips to get started, offered by members of a religious coalition to "take commercialism out of Christmas":

— "Recognize that the Christian symbols related to the birth of the Peace Child are being inappropriately used and aggressively used to sell products," said Robert Parham of the Baptist Center for Ethics. "We always have to begin with recognition of the problem."

— Use the church as a place to teach the true meaning of Christmas, not only in December but throughout the year.

— Teach within churches and families the ideals of self-sacrifice and proper determination of self-worth modeled by Jesus Christ.

— Make gifts at home rather than buying them.

— Reduce the number of gifts given, perhaps one gift per person.

— Give gifts of service rather than tangible items. For example, parents could give their children the gift of time, noted Karen Brown of the Center for the Study of Commercialism. "One of the ironies of Christmastime is people are hustling around to shop and give up really quality family time."

— Create a festive atmosphere in the home based on the celebration of Christ's birth rather than on giving and getting gifts.

— Observe the Advent season at church and at home to make Christmas more than just a one-day holiday. Many churches now produce Advent devotional guides written by their own members.

— Give gifts to worthwhile causes, such as missions, homeless shelters, and the like, on behalf of people you normally would give a purchased item.

— Purchase gifts that benefit worthy social causes. For example, Koinonia Farms in Americus, Ga., sells gift items to support its ministry. Another Georgia organization called "Alternatives" offers a catalog of gifts produced in Third World countries that help build developing economies.

Rankins carry marks of Mississippi upbringing

By Teresa Dickens

It is not difficult to tell that Jerry and Bobbye Rankin are Mississippians. You see it in the way they greet folks with their warm smiles and hearty handshakes and in the way they put a total stranger at ease when visiting with them.

The roots of the new Foreign Mission Board president and his wife run deep in the Hospitality State. Both are products of Mississippi Baptist families. He is the son of Pansy of Fulton and the late J.I. Rankin. Born in Tupelo, he grew up in Clinton and attended First Church there. Bobbye is the daughter of Ila of Brookhaven and the late Lester Lee Simmons. She was reared in Lincoln County, attending Fair River Church from age 18 months to 15, then Wellman Church. Both were educated at Mississippi College.

The couple credits their sensitivity to God's call to the training and nurture they received while growing up in Mississippi. Both recall learning during those formative years that "God has a plan and purpose for your life," and "My responsibility is to be surrendered and committed to his plan."

But, Bobbye noted, the influence of Mississippians in their sense of call continues even today. "These people have prayed specifically for us through the years, and I know that that has had a tremendous impact in our being open to God's leadership."

The Rankins' response to God's leadership has involved them in 23 years of missionary service with the FMB. Appointed in June 1970, the couple sent 14 years in Indonesia, four years in Bangkok, Thailand; and five years in Singapore. Their last two assignments were as an associate

area director then area director in Southern Asia and the Pacific, making their residence a base for their work.

Now, God has led them into their most challenging assignment: leading Southern Baptists' foreign missions enterprise.

"I fully expect that our \$85 million Lottie Moon goal will be exceeded this year.... we've got to give — sacrificially."

— Jerry Rankin

One of the demands of this new role has been its hectic schedule. Since assuming the presidency in June, the couple has traveled thousands of miles across the country to speak at various gatherings. "Speaking 13 times in five days in four states" is a common experience for Rankin, and the pace will not change soon — scheduling has already moved into 1995.

However, he is not complaining. "It is a tremendous opportunity," Rankin said. "The priority now is getting acquainted with Southern Baptists. People don't know me. I've been overseas for 23 years. I need to build relationships and credibility. It also gives me an opportunity to share what God is doing in the world through the Foreign Mission Board."

Another challenge for the couple is returning to the U.S. Along with making the move physically, the couple also has to move emotionally and culturally. The States and the Rankins have changed a

great deal in 23 years. Rankin said of the transition in the October-November issue of *The Commission*, "Adjusting to a new, expanded role of leadership may be minimal compared to adjusting to life in the United States."

But things are progressing.

They found the home they wanted: large enough for entertaining and accessible to the FMB. "We prayed for a house we could use as a place for hospitality," said Bobbye. "The answer came when a house across the street from the board's offices became available. It is perfect."

While the Rankins have found the presidency of the FMB to be full of challenges, they point out that it has its rewards too.

Included on that list is the chance to meet fellow missionaries and to visit with Southern Baptists across the nation. At the top of that list, however, is the opportunity to see God's activity around the world and share it with Southern Baptists.

"Through the reports and information that comes across my desk," Rankin explained, "I get to see an overview of what God is doing in the whole world. It is astounding. It generates such an excitement in me that we can be a part of the bigger picture."

"But in sharing this bigger picture with Southern Baptists, I am compelled to ask: 'Are we going to be faithful in providing support to meet the needs and send out the laborers?'"

"I believe we will," he answered. "I fully expect that our \$85 million Lottie Moon goal will be exceeded this year. If we are to just capitalize on the openings and opportunities God has given us, we've got to give — sacrificially."



Jerry and Bobbye Rankin welcome guests during a reception in their honor held earlier this fall at Woman's Missionary Union's national offices. The couple, both native Mississippians, have participated in many similar functions since he was named president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in June. (WMU photo by Dan Bryan)

Convention president encourages encouragers

By Rex Yancey

I have been the recipient of many encouraging letters from Mississippi Baptists across the state in recent weeks. The letters reminded me of Barnabas.

The church of Jerusalem had confidence in Barnabas and sent him to Antioch so he could bring back to them a firsthand report of what was going on.

One hundred years ago, the man who was shot out of the cannon at Barnum Bailey Circus, quit. P.T. Barnum made a trip to his house and tried to get the man to go back to work. He said, "Please come back. Men of your caliber are hard to find."

Men like Barnabas are still hard to find. The J.R. Ewings are honored for their style of leadership in today's world. Although this style of leadership is true in corporate

America, it should not be the style of leadership utilized in Christian America.

Barnabas had some characteristics about his life that caused the Jerusalem church to have confidence in him. He was a generous man. He stood up for Paul after his conversion. He knew a work of God when he saw it. He rejoiced over people being saved. He encouraged Paul, John Mark, and others. (He kept men on their feet.) He was full of the Holy Spirit; and the fruit of the Spirit characterized his life. He was also full of faith.

After Barnabas had witnessed the grace of God in Antioch, he realized the situation called for the gifts of the apostle Paul. He brought him back to Antioch and served with him for one year. Barnabas could play "second fiddle," but the music was sweeter because of him.

One final word, the disciples were called "Christians" first at Antioch. Maybe this was the first time they deserved the title!

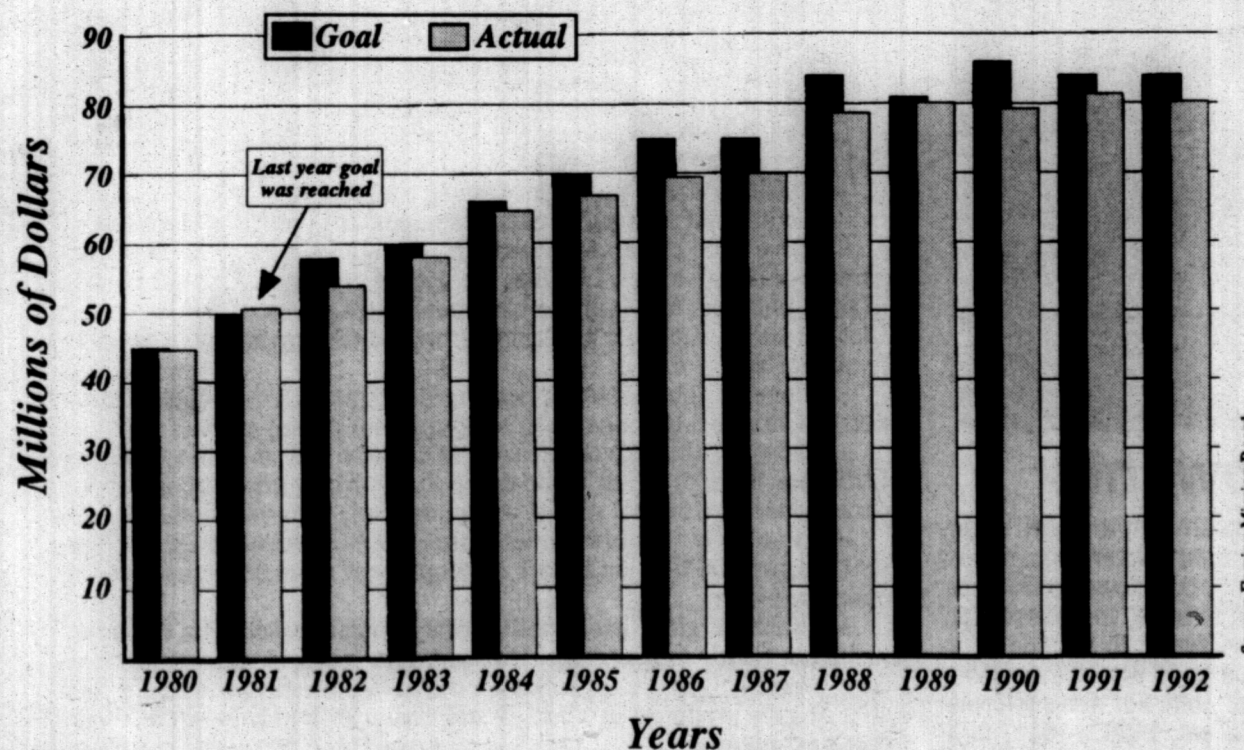
Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:11, "Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another." We live in a world that discourages us at every turn. The family of God should be the one place where our spirits are uplifted, refreshed, and encouraged. It should never be a place to be discouraged and torn down.

My appeal to you is to please be an encourager. People have heavy burdens today. Say nothing and do nothing to dampen the spirits of your family of faith.

Let me tell you how much I appreciate YOU and all you do for the Kingdom of God. Our state convention is richer because of the commitment you have to Jesus Christ. It is a joy to work alongside you. Keep up the good work!

Yancey is pastor, First Church, Pascagoula, and president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering 1980-1992



CHANGE THE WORLD NOW!
Lottie Moon Christmas
Offering for Foreign Missions
National Goal: \$85 million!



Letters to the editor



Abandoned the cause

Editor:

In this writer's opinion, the 1993 session of the Mississippi Baptist Convention was an exercise in gross hypocrisy.

Over and over we affirmed our state's motto, "Helping to bring Mississippi and the world to Jesus." We spoke eloquently about our state's leadership in the Southern Baptist Convention. We listened with rapt attention as [Jerry] Rankin described the needs of our foreign missionaries. Yet, when it really counted, we abandoned the cause we claimed to support. Mississippi Baptists could have, and should have, gladly increased our budget to include the proposed one-half percent increase to Southern Baptist Convention causes.

Hebron Church voted in our regular business session to give an additional one-time gift of \$100 to Southern Baptist Convention causes. If our other 2,000 Mississippi Baptist churches did the same, we

could more than make up the proposed increase.

Let us not allow our words to outweigh our deeds. We have no right to ask God to bless our missionary efforts if we are unwilling to support them with our gifts.

Keith Powell, pastor
Hebron Church
Grenada

Clinton "exhorted?"

Editor:

What were you thinking when you printed the article "Clinton exhorts even his critics to express their faith publicly" (Baptist Record, Nov. 25)? From the title and the glowing comments included I thought Clinton must have done something very beneficial — until I read what he actually said!

His first "encouraging" statement was: "It is high time we had an open and honest reaffirmation of the role of American citizens of faith — not so that we can agree,

but so that we can argue and discourse and seek the truth and seek to heal this troubled land."

Clinton literally prescribed argument, not agreement, to heal this troubled land. That is a breathtakingly ignorant concept!

But the most troubling "encouraging" statement was: "We are a people of faith. We have been so secure in that faith that we have enshrined in our Constitution protection for people who profess no faith. And good for us for doing so. That is what the First Amendment is all about."

The First Amendment is all about protecting atheists from religion?!

This last statement is particularly offensive in light of [Principal] Bishop Knox's recent dismissal and persecution for allowing Constitutional, court-approved voluntary student-led prayer at [Jackson's] Wingfield High.

In this same Baptist Record, you put an article entitled, "O'Hair despairs" in "her battle to sweep

religion from public life in America." Madalyn Murray O'Hair is the very atheist Clinton said "the First Amendment is all about" — and the one who created the problem Knox is trying to correct!

I didn't know why you would go out of your way to try to find something positive to say about Bill Clinton, but keep looking. You didn't find it in these remarks!

Jimmie Douglas
Brandon

Leaders responsible

Editor:

I am the messenger who, during the budget debate at the recent convention, pointed out that the Foreign Mission Board has total endowment and general fund reserves of over \$219,000,000.

I serve as pastor of a church that last year gave over \$93,000 (approximately 12% of undesignated receipts) to the Cooperative Program, \$15,000 to Lauderdale Association, and over \$38,000 to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. I share this information simply to demonstrate that First Church, Meridian, faithfully supports missions.

The financial statement published by the Foreign Mission Board in the 1991 SBC Annual and those sent to me for year ending 1992 by the FMB office of finance reveal the following information. As of Dec. 31 of each of the following years, the FMB financial statements show that total funds invested are respectively:

1989	\$207,937,000
1990	\$219,450,000
1991	\$197,357,000
1992	\$200,461,000

The 1992 total investments of \$200,461,000 are composed of \$116,201,000 in "general funds" and \$84,260,000 in endowment and similar funds. The fact is that the Foreign Mission Board at the end of the years 1989-92 had approximately \$200 million invested in "bonds, stocks, cash and cash equivalents, deed of trust notes, and properties."

The churches represented by the SBC Executive Committee and the churches from which our last seven presidents have come give an average of less than 7% to the Cooperative Program. The problem with funding adequately the Foreign Mission Board and other SBC needs rest with the current SBC leadership, not Mississippi Baptists.

John Leland Berg, pastor
First Church
Meridian

Practice tough love

Editor:

Recently, an article in The Baptist Record announced the planned divorce of a leading minister. It was presented as a positive and beneficial move for all concerned.

I was once asked, "What caused you to fall into sin?" I replied, "I didn't fall, I jumped." As one of the ever-increasing number of apostate ministers, I believe any attempt to explain, excuse, or exempt myself of responsibility and guilt only adds to insult to injury. The resulting humiliation, hurt, and harm caused by my sins were not by accident but of deliberate choice.

No servant of God's, considering or involved in acts of disobedience, can ever escape the lingering effects of his infidelity. He may attempt to convince himself that he can be like Job, recover and recoup more that was lost, but will find that he is more like David, remorseful and repentant with his sins ever before him. He will find that it's not a case of being tested and found unfaithful, but rather being tempted and proven weak.

I have been where some are, and where others are going. I know the torture that Peter felt while cursing and denying, saw Jesus looking at him (Luke 22:61) and the torment David knew when Nathan said, "Thou art the man" (2 Sam. 12:7). Confrontation in love is not only scriptural, but often necessary for repentance.

There is no place for a feel-good liberal church philosophy that says excuse the sinner, overlook the sin. What must be is a sound policy of love the sinner, hate the sin. Condemning overt sin of believers should never be considered unchristian, but rather a faithful Christian's responsibility. 1 Corinthians 5 and 6 establishes the church's attitude and actions regarding members in sin. Paul knew that there were times and situations that require a church to practice tough love.

Repentance comes when we are faced with our sins and restoration when we are forgiven our sins (Psalms 51).

Bryan Sherman
Braxton

Thanks for prayers

Editor:

Do please let me take this means of expressing the deep gratitude that my entire family and I have felt for the obvious prayer support that so very many inside of Mississippi and outside have given for my son, Dennis, his wife, Margaret, and their children, Lauren, John, and Micah, in Burundi.

We had some very anxious days of not knowing the situation or the circumstances, and you cannot imagine how we were sustained by the prayers of our dear friends everywhere.

Please pray earnestly for Dennis and his family and also for the other four missionary families in Burundi. Please pray, too, for the country, for the government, and for the dear people in that country.

May God's richest blessings be upon each and all of you.

John McCall
Clinton

WITNESS COMMITMENT DAY

SUNDAY, JANUARY 9, 1994

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In every Mississippi Baptist Heart



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Date to Begin

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"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Acts 1:8

These are the last recorded spoken words of Jesus before ascending back to glory.
Are you obedient?

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Just for the Record



The GAs of Lake Harbor Church, Rankin County, held a recognition service with the theme, "Sharing God's Word." The GAs shared Bible verses and presented a program on missions. Pictured are Deanna Tagert, Megan Watkins, Rachel Eure, Morgan Watkins, and Joy Rachel, leader. James Edwards is pastor.



Ballet Magnificat will present "A Christmas Festival" Dec. 11 at 7 p.m. and Dec. 12 at 2 p.m. in the Jackson Municipal Auditorium. Tickets are free, but are necessary to assure seating. They are available at area Christian bookstores. Canned goods for the Community Stewpot and a love offering will be collected. For more information, call the studio at (601) 982-2144.

Ron Dunn, evangelist, will be teaching a one-week academic workshop, Jan. 3-7, on the campus of New Orleans Seminary. Students who require housing for the workshop must register by Tues., Dec. 21. All registration materials, including fees, must be paid by Mon., Jan. 3. Cost for the course is \$150. For more information, call 1-800-662-8701, ext. 3323.

The adult and children's choir of Glade Church, Laurel, will present the Christmas musical and drama, "Bethlehem Star," at 6:30 p.m. on Dec. 11 and 12 under the direction of Currie Page, music director. Lois Jane, Christian recording artist, will be in concert at Glade Church, Dec. 12 at 11 a.m. Mike Thompson is pastor.

The youths of First Church, Flowood, will present Christmas House '93 on Dec. 9-10, 7-10 p.m., and Dec. 11, 6-11 p.m. Tickets are \$4. For more information, call 939-4266.

The Chancel Choir of Calvary Church, Jackson, will present Christmas By Candlelight on Dec. 12 at 6 p.m. Gil Powell is minister of music. James W. Street is pastor.

The Home of Grace is pleased to announce the dedication of its new building at the Shelter in Gautier, a 22-year-old home for senior citizens. Dedication ceremonies will begin at 2:30 p.m. Dec. 12. The 7,000-square-foot building will accommodate 18 senior men, and includes a full kitchen, dining area, laundry room, and director's apartment. For more information, call (601) 497-1312. Billy Barton is executive director.

Poplar Springs Church, Mendenhall, recently held a recognition service for its Acteens, GAs, and RAs. Pictured, from left, front row, are Dawn May, Tonya Taylor, Dan May, Jonathan Craft, Homer May; middle row, Lindsay Thornton, Tammy Taylor, Crystal Jones, Jonathan Grantham, Eric Still; back row, Beverly Fewell, Acteen leader, Gayla Bridges, Acteen leader, Shena Layton, GA leader, Margaret Taylor, GA leader, David Craft, RA leader, Darryl Lee, RA leader, Chris Layton, RA leader, and Jeff Smith, RA leader.



Cedar Grove Church, Columbia, held its GA-Acteen recognition service on Sept. 26. Pictured, from left, are Brandi Fortenberry, Ashley Fortenberry, Kayla Breland, Sara Stringer, Amanda Vasilion, Avery Brumfield, Sarah Watts, Jeni Beard, Amanda Graves, Linda Norton, Joni Beard, and Wendi Bourne. GA leaders are Carol Arthur and Patsy May. Acteen leaders are Cissy Beard and Patty Watts. David Green is pastor.



LifeAnswers

Ron Mumbower, Ed.D.
Minister of Counseling
First Church, Jackson

Would you explain to me the term "codependency?"

that is missing or lacking in life.

The word literally means "dependent upon or with." I found this description in the book *Love is a Choice* by Minirth and Meier, which should help explain the term better:

1. The codependent is driven by one or more compulsions.
2. The codependent is bound and often tormented by the way things were in the dysfunctional family of origin.
3. The codependent's self-esteem (and, frequently, maturity) is very low.
4. A codependent is certain his or her happiness hinges on others.
5. Conversely, a codependent feels inordinately responsible for others.
6. The codependent's relationship with a spouse or significant other person (SOP) is marred by damaging, unstable lack of balance between dependence and independence.
7. The codependent is a master of denial and repression.
8. The codependent worries about things he or she can't change and may well try to change them.
9. A codependent's life is punctuated by extremes.
10. A codependent is constantly looking for the something

I grew up using the advent wreath as a Christmas tradition in my home and wish to pass this on to my children. My wife, however, sees this as a high church practice and feels it is not appropriate. How can we clear this up?

The practice of advent is growing in this country. It is used more in liturgical settings, but there are some excellent lessons about our Christian heritage that we can learn from using the advent wreath. I would suggest you and your wife go to a Christian bookstore and study some of the devotion books that are available on this topic.

The main problem with resistance is fear of the unknown. The word "advent" comes from the Latin meaning "coming." Celebrating the Advent season means celebrating the coming of Jesus as God's gift to the world.

The main purpose of the Advent is to help us to be mindful of the true reason we celebrate Christmas. A family, however, can do this without an advent wreath by telling the stories of Jesus and keeping the real Christmas story before the whole family. (I invite other readers to send in ideas on how they keep Christ in Christmas.)

Send your counseling questions to LifeAnswers c/o The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Please be brief. Name and address not required. Remember: in time of crisis, your pastor can make recommendations on your counseling needs.

Revival Dates

Peoples, Ripley (Benton-Tippah): Dec. 10-12; services, Fri. and Sat., 7 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.; Clifford Rice, Campbell, Mo., evangelist; Tony Mont, pastor.

The Personnel Committee of the Rankin County Association will accept resumes through Dec. 31, 1993, for the position of Director of Missions. The director will give general supervision to the association's 58 member-churches.

Send resumes to:
Rev. Odus Jackson, Chairman,
RCBA Personnel Committee,
P.O. Box 1257,
Brandon, MS 39043

Anti-casino meet set for Aberdeen

An anti-casino rally will be held Dec. 12 at the Aberdeen City Hall. The meeting, set for 2 p.m., is sponsored by Families for Quality Life.

Concerned Christians of all denominations are invited to hear Paul Jones of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Christian Action Commission speak in opposition to the establishment of gambling casinos in the area.

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FOUNDATION

From page 3

of funds consistent with the highest ideals of Christian stewardship, (2) Confusion and probable competition would necessarily result from the duplication of services from two or more convention institutions at a time when cooperation is needed, (3) Reduction in services would affect operating budget and ultimately services to the SBC and its institutions, (4) A similar request from the Foundation to increase its work in the states previously was denied (by the SBC), and (5) State institutions would be adversely affected.

If all else fails, the motion calls for the Foundation to present its position to both the SBC Executive Committee and the Southern Baptist Convention, itself, if needed.

The SBC Executive Committee will consider the Annuity Board's request at a meeting in Nashville Feb. 21-23.

In addition, Johnson said the

Foundation did not cost Southern Baptists any amount but rather was a net provider to the SBC for the Cooperative Program. He said the Foundation received \$291,381 from the Cooperative Program but disbursed \$294,753, undesignated, through the Cooperative Program from trusts administered by the Foundation.

In other action, trustees reaffirmed their response to motions at the 1992 SBC annual meeting on limiting severance benefits. Their response noted the Foundation does not permit severance gifts, luxury gifts, or lifetime travel expenses.

The Foundation was established to "motivate and encourage the making of gifts, donations, and benefactions by deed, will, gift annuity, or otherwise for the advancement, extension and maintenance of the various causes and objects fostered by the SBC." Trustees are representatives of each SBC board, agency, institution, and commission, plus 15 members-at-large.

Hollinger is director of Baptist Press.

Thursday, December 9, 1993

BAPTIST RECORD PAGE 2

Names in the News



Sunday School recognition services were held recently at Rolling Creek Church, Quito, Ecuador. Pictured at top left is Kathryn "Miss Kitty" Bonner, for 35 years of teaching children and Ruby McKnight, right, for her many years teaching adult women.

Receiving pins for perfect attendance in top right picture are Brooke Dew, Corey Furline, Christopher Furline, one year; Alex Holloman and Dwayne Furline, two years; Morgan Dearman, three years; Kristy



Gunter, Anna Lewis, Tammie Ivey, four years; Abby Scott and Christine Gunter, five years; Trisa Furline and Nancy Davis, six years; David Bonner, Brent Holloman, seven years; Kim Brumfield, Heath Brumfield, Lee Lewis, eight years; Lynn Fairchild and Randall Martin, nine years; Patsy Dew, Lesli Bonner, and Lane Scott, 10 years; Annette Holloman, 11 years; Auzie Mozingo, 14 years; and Edith Long, 26 years.

FMB

From page 3

The reserves also include \$25 million in contingency funds for major emergencies. The Southern Baptist Convention mandates each agency to maintain a contingency reserve. The \$25 million figure, Johnson said, is less than one-third the maximum amount the board is allowed under SBC guidelines.

The remaining range of \$100 million to \$150 million, mostly budgeted funds in the process of being spent, stay invested only until it is possible to put them to their intended use.

Those funds include such things as approved appropriations not yet spent, contributions for

hunger and relief, and budgeted funds such as Lottie Moon Offering and Cooperative Program receipts. "Typically, these funds would remain invested for only several months," Johnson said.

More than 87% of the board's \$185 million annual budget — including all hunger and relief funds and all Lottie Moon funds — is used in the board's overseas budget as soon as it can be properly spent.

Because the board does most of its work overseas, Johnson said, it takes longer for it to spend some of its funds than any other SBC entity because of varying and complex international logistics, regulations, and delays.

"While funds are in the process of being spent, we exercise good stewardship by making our cash flow earn money," Johnson said.

O'Brien writes for FMB.

E.V. Hill will speak at Temple Church, Hattiesburg, on Dec. 12 at 6 p.m. He is

pastor of Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church, Los Angeles, Calif. Hill has spoken on several occasions at the Southern Baptist Convention and Mississippi Baptist Convention. Dean Register is pastor of Temple Church.

Former state Representative Roy Dabbs is now available for speaking engagements. Dabbs, who served two terms in the Mississippi House of Representatives, has served several churches as supply preacher and interim pastor. He can be contacted at 5965 Highway 45 South, Meridian, MS 39301; telephone (601) 482-4658.

Amy Harris is serving as seminary intern in student ministries at

Gulf Coast Community College, Perkinson campus. From Ohio, she is a graduate of Campbellsville College and is currently a student at New Orleans Seminary. She was a 1993 summer missionary church starter in South Dakota. Tim Thomas is GCCC's BSU director.

Harris

Missionary News

Don and Barbara Phlegar, missionaries to Thailand, are in the States for medical leave. Don had an operation in late November. They are presently living in the missionary residence of Colonial Heights, Jackson; telephone (601) 957-9296.



Cash Church, Scott Association, recently held an ordination service to add two new deacons. They are Gordon L. Pope, left center, and Billy Ray Gunn, right center. Max Jones, left, New Hebron Church, brought the charge to the candidates and Bob Smith, right, pastor of Cash Church, brought the charge to the church.

Rich Greenwell has joined the administrative staff of Mississippi Baptist Medical Center as director of planning. He came to MBMC from Indiana Hospital in Indiana, Pa., where he was vice president. Greenwell has 19 years of health-care experience. The Des Moines, Iowa, native received his MBA from Drake University there.

Retired Southern Baptist missionary Stella Austin, an educator in Nigeria for 36 years, died Nov. 29 after a long battle with cancer in her hometown, Lenoir, N.C. Austin, 73, was appointed a missionary to Nigeria in 1949 by the Foreign Mission Board. She was a teacher and principal at Baptist girls' high schools in Agbor and Oshogbo.

Keith Grubbs of Pearl, was

ordained to the gospel ministry on Aug. 29 at First Church, Pearl. Grubbs is presently a student at New Orleans Seminary. He is pastor of Walker Hill Church, Brandon, and has been there since July 11, 1993. John Brock is pastor of First Church, Pearl.

Mrs. Lathan Bray recently received a Sunday School pin for 35 years of perfect attendance. The pin was presented by New Liberty Church, Tishomingo Association, where her late husband served as pastor. Edwin Kennedy is pastor of New

Bray Liberty Church.

Staff Changes

First Church, Water Valley, called Randy Bain as pastor effective Dec. 5. A native of Oxford, he received his education at Blue Mountain College and Mid America Seminary. His previous place of service was First Church, Abbeville.

Hebron Church of Pheba, Clay Association, has recently called Matthew Ware of Petal as music director and Marty Coleman of West Point as youth director. John H. Crump is pastor.

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To keep churches vibrant —

Ed Young offers top-10 lists that "talk church"

NEW ORLEANS (BP) — "What I like to do is just sit around a table and talk church," the Southern Baptist Convention's president recently told students at a New Orleans Seminary chapel.

"You've heard enough sermons in this chapel for the kingdom to come in several times," said Ed Young, a native of Laurel, as he stepped from behind the pulpit and walked down to the second pew.

Young has been the pastor of Second Church, Houston, for just over 15 years. He previously was the pastor of First Baptist churches in Erwin and Canton, N.C., and in Taylors and Columbia, S.C.

He told NOBTS students that when he was a seminary student, "What I wanted to do was to sit down with some of those (chapel speakers) and just ask some questions and hear some things that would stretch me a little bit, challenge me a little bit."

Young presented a list of 20 ideas — two top-10 lists — about church, then answered questions from students.

The primary function of the church, Young said, is to worship. "Out of worship comes evangelism (and)... discipleship. But evangelism or discipleship without a worshipping person, without a

worshipping body,... basically is powerless."

To have worship, Young said there must be wonder. "There has to be an awe there.... There has to be a mystery about it. And the older you and I get, the more difficult it is to keep the sense of wonder of the faith.... (But) that's the beginning of worship."

Then out of wonder comes gratitude and out of gratitude comes worship, he said.

Acknowledging the debatableness of his "top-10" lists, Young first presented "10 things I think personally will just absolutely hurt a church" and keep it from worshipping, leading people to Christ, and making an impact of discipleship on people's lives:

1) Location. "I've been pastor of five churches; each church was smaller than the church I went to next," he said. "I can tell you location is very important ... in growing a church."

2) A committee-led church. "If anybody can find me a genuinely growing church that was committee-led, would you please march that church out where I can see it?" he said. "That's not a New Testament pattern.... A committee-led church will never grow."

3) The "right-size" mentality.

"I've never been at a church where somebody didn't say to me, 'Don't you think our church now is about the right size?' That's called being at ease in Zion."

4) Negative preaching. "The idea that every Sunday we've got to skin everybody that comes to worship will not build a church. Jesus didn't spend a whole lot of time talking about sin.... Jesus talked about somebody being lost. ... We think we have to help the Holy Spirit convict everybody of sin. We don't have to do a lot of that. The Holy Spirit does that."

5) Fear of debt. "I'm not for going in debt, but you've got to take it wisely."

6) Improper use of time by staff leadership. "You've got to be a wise steward of your time and not be dominated by that which is not profitable."

7) Staff without a boss. "Somebody has got to be held responsible. I've told the people in my church that if a chair on the second floor is dusty on Sunday morning, it's my fault.... I think there must be a servant leadership type of role that we have as ministers within the church."

8) Threatening atmosphere to non-Christians. "We need to gear our churches to those who aren't there yet.... That means that those who are there need to pastor and

minister and shepherd one another," while those who are gifted to evangelize should go out to get those who aren't there yet, Young said.

9) Evangelistic counting. "Count with integrity."

10) Shabby buildings. "Let people know that we care about this place."

"My basic thesis," Young said, "is... if we don't change the methodology of how we do church — never the message... — the church as we do it today will go out of business. The body of Christ will not go out of business, ... but the way we're doing church, and a lot of the methodology we use, we had better change, big-time change."

Moving out of the negative, Young then gave a list of 10 growth principles.

1) Leadership. "I can't emphasize this enough," he said.

2) Surplus parking.

3) Visibility. "Do some non-threatening events to get to know people.... Jesus was a friend of sinners."

4) Discern needs and meet them. Many parents, for example, want somebody at church who will love and work with their children. Through such ministry "and all the support groups that your

church can be involved in,... you'll have an evangelistic church."

5) A praying church. "When we began to pray a little bit, we saw God begin to do supernatural things in worship and in Bible study."

6) Discernment of gifts.... "I believe that God gives to every church exactly what they need. We are to equip and call forth the gifts of those who are there, and we've got a full staff!"

7) Shared vision. "Everybody is a part."

8) Quality. "We make our teachers take their responsibility exceedingly seriously," he said. Anyone who teaches usually has completed MasterLife, has been part of the prayer ministry, and has been through (the Baptist) "Experiencing God" (study series). The church also provides a resource library and video tapes of upcoming Sunday School lessons presented by a master teacher and offers beginning Greek classes for the teachers.

9) Constant change. "The best time to change something is when you first go to a church.... Go there all ready with a vision; don't wait to do the basic, essential things that need to be done to make that church come alive."

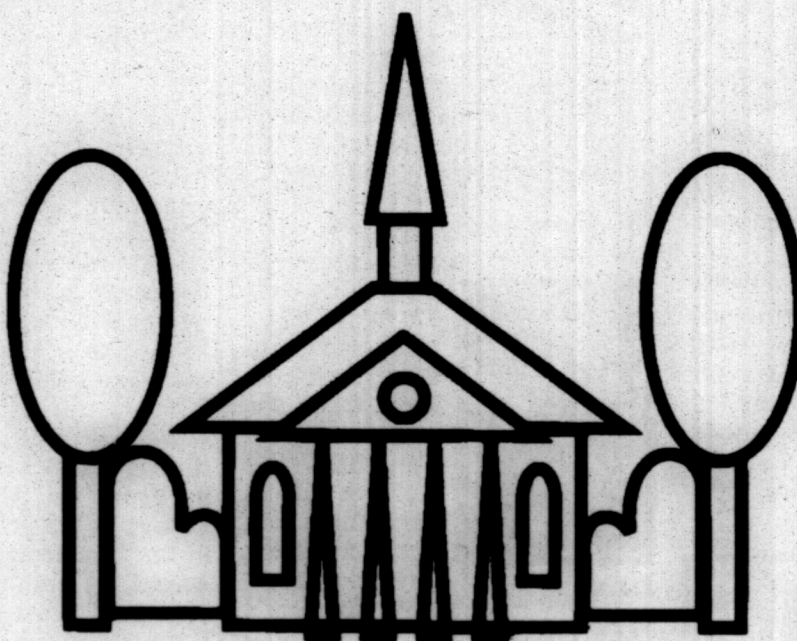
10) Teach and preach the Bible.

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Uniform Say yes to God



By Michael O'Brien
Luke 1

"I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said" (v. 38, NIV). As we approach this holy season of the year, let's all be encouraged by Mary's response to the Lord's messenger and respond to God by saying, "May it be to me as you would want." Although we will deal with verses 26-38 in this lesson, let me encourage you to read also verses 39-56 and listen to Mary's song.

Mary's messenger (vv. 26-27). God sent an angel to visit Mary with the news that she was to bear the Christ Child. God sent a named angel. We read of other angelic visits in the Scriptures, but they are not always named. Gabriel seems to be a very important angel, and when we hear from him, it is usually with important news. Mary is engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, but at this point, she is still a virgin.

Mary's message (vv. 28-29). Gabriel's message to Mary was that she was a very highly favored young lady. He explained to her that she had and was still enjoying the Lord's presence; that she was blessed among all the women of the earth. Messiah was to come, and Mary, who enjoyed the Lord's presence, would have been aware of that; but she was troubled (v. 29). "What kind of a greeting is this?" she wondered.

Mary's mission (vv. 30-33). Although Mary was troubled, she listened as the angel Gabriel explained her mission. Mary had been chosen to be the mother of the Messiah. She was favored of God among all the women of the earth. She would carry a child, with one exception — she was as pure as the driven snow. Gabriel tells her not to be afraid, and when her Son is born, to name him Jesus (v. 31).

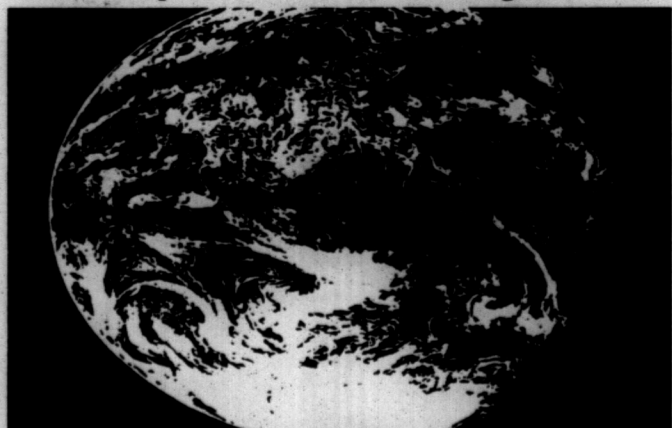
Did Mary understand all this? Perhaps, at least in part. "He will be called the Son of the Most High" (v. 32) is pretty self-explanatory. The rest of verse 32 combined with verse 33 explains his kingship, and I feel sure that Mary pondered all of this in her heart. Her mission, however, was to carry the child.

Mary's marvel (vv. 34-37). "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" No one can doubt Mary's wonderment. After all, nothing had ever happened like this before. Gabriel was so patient. The Lord's messenger explained things so that she could understand and be at ease. He even told her about her cousin Elizabeth, who, being barren, was also going to have a child. Two seemingly impossible things were to take place in a very short period of time. The key word here is "seemingly." Gabriel added quickly, "Nothing is impossible with God" (v. 37b).

There are several lessons for us to learn in this story, but let's all try to learn this one: God can do anything.

Mary's ministry (v. 38). We all have ministries. Some have a divine call to a specific task such as pastoring or evangelism. However, long before the Lord ever calls a man to preach the gospel, he has a ministry. Mary placed herself at God's disposal as his handmaid. She said in respect, "I am your servant." Gabriel had his answer and he departed from her presence. Does God have your answer?

O'Brien is pastor, First Church, Lexington.



CHANGE THE WORLD
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Bible Book Preparation for a successor



By Jewel P. Merritt
Deuteronomy 31, 32

A change in leaders can be a traumatic, sometimes even a violent time in the life of a nation. We are so blessed in this country that the out-going president includes his successor in planning and carrying out the affairs of state. God made such plans for Moses' successor.

Assurance of God's presence with Israel after Moses' death (31:2-3). When my husband and I married 44 years ago, we had the minister include the poem, "Rabbi Ben Ezra" by Robert Browning in our ceremony. One line especially stands out in my mind: "Grow old along with me, the best is yet to be; the last of life for which the first is made." All of life is good when it is walked with the two whom you love and who love you — the Lord and your mate. Life does get sweeter as we go along together.

Moses had lived a long, full life. At the age of 80 he was called of God to lead Israel out of slavery to the Promised Land. It's interesting to me that Moses' excuses for not wanting that task did not include his age (Ex. 3:7-4:17)! He was evidently young in spirit.

Forty hard years had passed. Moses, at the age of 120, knew it was time for him to step down as leader. But Israel's true Leader would not change. "The Lord thy God, he will go over before thee" (v. 3a). Even though earthly leaders change, the great I Am continues to lead his people as always. God also appointed Moses' successor, Joshua. God had been preparing Joshua for this role for years. Now it was his turn to serve as leader under the Lord.

Instructions concerning public reading of the law (31:12-13). How long should believers continue to study the Bible? All our lives! Continued study brings new hope, new admonitions, new insights to be added to the treasures gleaned through the years. God always has new wisdom to give those who seek it.

God planned for a regular reading of the law. All the people — men, women, children, and aliens — were to assemble for this reading. There was a threefold reason for this reading. The people were to Listen, to Learn to fear the Lord, and to Follow his law (v. 12). There is an imperative given in verse 13: "Their children must hear it and learn to fear the Lord."

Children learn so much about the Lord in Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Mission Friends, etc. But the best classroom for teaching God's love and laws is in the home. At home the children hear God's Word and see it acted out in their parents' lives. When the church and the Christian home strive together to teach God's truths to the young, then the children are most blessed.

God's charge to Moses (31:14-16a). The Lord spoke to Moses of his coming death. Then God told Moses and Joshua to come to the Tent of Meeting. God himself commissioned Joshua.

Because God knew the hearts of the Israelites, he was aware that the people would soon desert him for pagan worship. At the Lord's command, Moses composed a song which was to be a reminder to the people that God had called them to be a righteous people.

Moses' song of witness (32:3-4, 46-47). How can we mere mortals describe the awesome greatness and power of our Lord? We cannot, but Moses wrote beautiful truths about the Lord God in his song.

He began by proclaiming God's name and praising his greatness (v. 3). In verse 4 Moses referred to the Lord as the Rock. A rock is a steady foundation. Our Lord is that. He is faithful. He does no wrong. He is always just and upright. Surely, such a One who is so far above us in every way is worthy of our praise and devotion!

Upon the completion of this song and the speaking of it to the people, Moses made one last plea to the people to take these words to heart and to teach them to their children. Moses concluded with these words, "They are not just idle words for you — they are your life" (32:47a, NIV).

Merritt is a member of First Church, Jackson.

Life and Work Acceptance of God's plan



By Mark A. Rathel
Luke 1

When I was a college freshman, I developed a friendship with a student from Japan. My friend eagerly attempted to learn everything he could about American culture. As part of his "experiencing" America, he attended my home church. I shared the gospel with my friend. He politely replied, "I cannot become a Christian. I do not think the virgin birth is possible."

The virgin conception of Jesus Christ is a cardinal truth of the Christian faith. A God powerful enough to create the universe certainly can create life in the womb without the natural involvement of the father. The birth narratives of Jesus in Matthew and Luke proclaim a twin truth. First, the birth narratives affirm the uniqueness of Jesus, the Son of God. Second, the birth narratives affirm that Jesus had a real human nature. The earliest heresy of the Christian movement denied the humanity of Jesus.

Mary was greatly troubled (vv. 26-29). The Bible gives the names of two angels, Gabriel and Michael. The angel Gabriel announced the divine involvement in the births of John and Jesus. In the case of John, the age of the parents necessitated divine involvement. In the case of Jesus, divine involvement resulted in a one-of-a-kind conception.

Mary's parents named her after Miriam, the sister of Moses. Mary was betrothed to Joseph, a descendant of David. The law regarded Mary as the wife of Joseph, although Mary continued to live with her parents. A period of one year normally elapsed after betrothal before a woman moved into her husband's house. The Bible emphatically affirms that Mary was a virgin.

The greeted "Favored One" puzzled Mary. The angel proclaimed that she was a recipient of God's grace. The Bible does not contain any suggestion of worthiness on the part of Mary.

The angel explained the favor of God (vv. 30-33). The phrase "favor with God" refers to the free, gracious choice of God. God freely and graciously chose Mary to be the mother of the Messiah. The future son of Mary is described through the use of three titles: Great, Son of the Most High, and Messiah. The Son is Great in his character, attributes, and deeds. He is the Son of the Most High, a title meaning the same thing as Son of God. He eternally reigns over the nation of Israel. Only deity can reign eternally.

Mary questioned the angel (v. 34). Mary's question indicates that she understood the angel to mean that the conception would take place before the marriage. Mary acknowledged the impossibility of conception humanly speaking since she had no sexual relationships.

The angel explained God's plan (vv. 35-37). Malcolm Tolbert wrote concerning the angel's explanation, "Mary's unique Son is to come into the world as a result of the creative power of God's Spirit." The Spirit created life within the body of Mary. Unlike Zechariah, Mary did not request a sign. The angel, however, illustrated the power of God through the example of Elizabeth, a relative of Mary. Elizabeth, advanced in years, experienced the power of God to produce life, albeit through natural means. Some translations call Elizabeth a cousin of Mary. The Greek New Testament, however, simply states Elizabeth is a relative without detailing the nature of the relation.

A person able to affirm that nothing is impossible with God has no problem accepting the virgin conception of Jesus. Literally, verse 37 states, "No word from God will be powerless." God fulfills his promises.

Mary submitted to God's plan (v. 38). Mary called herself a handmaid, or slave of the Lord. She affirmed that her position was one of submission to the will of God. The will of God is not like a buffet, where a believer picks from among a wide selection. Only through obedience do we demonstrate love for God.

Rathel is pastor, Bay Vista Church, Biloxi.

capsules

FELLOWSHIP RECEIPTS LOW IN OCTOBER: ATLANTA (ABP) — The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship received less money in October than any other month this year — \$678,063. While Fellowship receipts for the first nine months of the year grew 63% over the same period last year, receipts in October 1993 were barely higher than October 1992 — up 3.7%. An unusually high contribution total in October 1992 explains some of the difference. But the October 1993 total — which only became available Nov. 23 — represented a 14% drop from September. Fellowship officials said they have no explanation for the sudden turnaround, but neither are they worried. "I am not concerned," said Cecil Sherman, Fellowship coordinator. Receipts for November showed an increase after only three weeks, he said, and the Fellowship's year-to-date performance overshadows a one-month slump. In 10 months this year, the Fellowship has taken in \$8.5 million, 16% more than in all of 1993. Sherman said receipts should surpass the goal of \$10 million by year's end. Last year the organization of Baptist moderates took in \$7.3 million. The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was established in 1990 by Southern Baptists displeased with the current conservative direction of the Southern Baptist Convention and its agencies. Indeed, the Fellowship's contributors are directing more and more of their money away from traditional SBC causes and toward the Fellowship's own efforts. In 1991, 59% of contributions were designated for Southern Baptist agencies. That percentage has fallen to 26% so far this year. Meanwhile, 57% of 1993 contributions have been targeted for the Fellowship's own programs, such as the organization's missions venture. An additional 17% has gone to state Baptist conventions and Fellowship-endorsed agencies and organizations.

KENYAN STUDENTS TAKE "TRUE LOVE WAITS" PLEDGE: NYERI, Kenya (BP) — "True Love Waits" has gone international. The Baptist Sunday School Board program stressing the Christian plan for love, sex, and marriage was recently completed by students at Nyeri Baptist High School in Nyeri, Kenya. At a commitment service following three weeks of study, 130 students came forward to pledge their resolve to wait for true love — and marriage — before expressing their feelings sexually. "The commitments demonstrated the students' faith in God's plan for love and marriage," said Jill Branyon, a Southern Baptist missionary and acting headmaster at the school. "The maturity and sensitivity displayed during the sessions confirmed that youth can make good decisions when they're given accurate information. Many of those who advocate 'safe sex' have failed in their own commitments or receive financial gain by selling safe-sex devices."

NEW ELCA SEXUALITY REPORT ENDORSES HOMOSEXUALITY: CHICAGO, Ill. (EP) — Human sexuality should be expressed only in loving, committed relationships — but not necessarily limited to heterosexual marriages, according to a report released by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The 21-page report, a first draft of a proposed social statement for the church, endorses homosexuality and suggests that marriage, though desirable, is optional for committed couples. The report presents the perspective of "those of us who are gay or lesbian Christians," and calls on the church to "challenge stereotypes" of gays and lesbians, and to challenge the idea that all homosexual activity is contrary to God's law. Biblical passages condemning homosexuality are addressed in the report, which dismisses them either by arguing that they refer only to abusive homosexual activity, or that they fail to take into account the modern concept of an immutable "sexual orientation." Recognition of committed couples who live together without the benefit of marriage is urged. "It is the binding commitment, not the license or ceremony, that lies at the heart of biblical understandings of marriage," says the report. "In those circumstances where a legal marriage is not feasible, communities of faith may need to consider other ways of publicly affirming and communally supporting a loving, binding commitment between two people." The report, sent to 19,000 pastors and church leaders in late October, has drawn sharp criticism from the conservative wing of the 5.2 million-member denomination.

Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx
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ZOW BIC XILLAPCAWY YET KIDA WIFUHC OT, EP
WYUW, FYEKA FA FAHA JAW TEPPAHT, XYHETW
CEAC SIH OT.

HILUPT SEDA:AEBYW

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Second Timothy One:Thirteen.

Destitute refugees lead a triumphant parade

By Ed Moses

The scene was a refugee camp within Zimbabwe — home to 34,000 displaced persons from Mozambique.

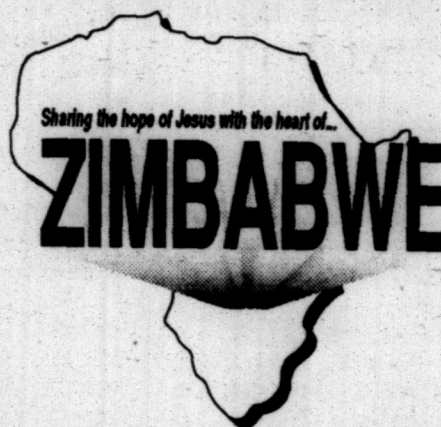
During mid-afternoon on Saturday, the excitement level was almost electrifying. A crowd of about 350 believers had gathered expectantly at our Baptist Church situated on a prominent hill-top in the center of 19 refugee "villages." The impromptu marching band had assembled and the "orchestra" was composed of many goat-skin drums, long spiraling khudu horns of the "umpaah" sounds, gourd shakers, homemade tambourines, and other indigenous instruments from Mozambiquan culture.

The big parade started down the main road right through the center of the refugee camp. It snaked its way to the Mazowe River about a mile away as large amounts of dust rose in the air. With all that noise and jubilant singing, thousands of refugees soon came out of their huts to see this strange procession. They had never seen such a group celebrating with such enthusiasm and joy.

The baptism service as viewed from the river banks was most impressive as the pastor explained the beautiful symbolism of baptism so clearly to the hundreds of observers and the curious.

All went well until "mashave spirits" showed that they had pos-

sessed eight different women. The mashave spirit is an evil family spirit that is handed down to some recipients from generation to generation. This possession is most commonly seen in women who take the bold step to be baptized in the all powerful Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.



Just as such a woman is about to be immersed, the evil spirit tries one last ditch effort to take control. The victim often shows super-human strength, and suddenly her body is wildly out of control. It often takes four or five strong men to carry her out of the water, to hold her on the river bank, and pray until the evil spirit leaves. Then the woman is peacefully baptized.

Our church leaders showed such maturity in the calm and orderly way they prayed for these women to be set free. Satan was

defeated eight times and peace prevailed after the initial confusion.

As the last of the 116 believers came up out of the river and the final prayer was offered, the initial sense of joy and victory even intensified as the homeward bound triumphal procession once more attracted the attention of thousands of curious onlookers. The march home with loud singing and dancing to the various percussion instruments made one old man exclaim, "There goes those happy Baptists again!"

The next day was Sunday and 426 reverent worshipers gathered together in the church they had built themselves to solemnly celebrate the Lord's Supper. Over 100 adult men were present which is most unusual in Africa. The choir outdid themselves, not one of whom knew how to read a single note. Their joyous singing in three languages overflowed so harmoniously from hearts saturated with God's unconditional love for refugees.

Our refugee church had not intended to make a real spectacle that day. But they made a strong statement and gave an unusual testimony to God's grace as spontaneous joy overflowed from the hearts of destitute refugees who led a triumphant parade to and from the Mazowe River.

Moses is a foreign missionary in Zimbabwe.

Anyone can fall for a scam —

Tips to help seniors avoid cons

Following is the first in a series of articles on senior adults written by Robert J. Hastings, retired editor of the *Illinois Baptist*, news-journal of the Illinois Baptist State Association.

Cynthia (not her real name), on a trip to the Caribbean, was pleased when a well-dressed man sat down beside her on the plane. Although excited about her vacation, Cynthia, a widow, was lonesome. And worried about a troublesome leak in her roof, which no one had been able to find. What if the leak worsened while she was gone and rain ruined her furniture?

So she confided in her seatmate, who quickly responded, "Isn't this a coincidence? You see, I'm a roofing contractor with crews all across the country. My men could fix that roof in no time."

"Really?" replied Cynthia, trustingly. "Yes," he assured her. "We specialize in problem roofs. I'll call one of my crew bosses and he'll get right on it."

Before she deplaned, Cynthia wrote the "contractor" a generous check. She thanked him profusely. "Now I can relax and enjoy my vacation." But as far as I know, her roof is still leaking. Cynthia was the victim of a con artist, plying the Caribbean in search of unsuspect-

ing widows.

Anyone can fall for a scam. Senior adults are especially vulnerable. We like to believe the best about people. We're trusting, and sometimes gullible.

Here's a good rule: "If a sales pitch, investment, or service seems 'too good to be true,' it probably is."

The "pigeon drop" is a common scam. Two people working as a team stop an older person on a parking lot and say, "Look at this bag of money we found in a trash bin (or whatever). We feel badly keeping all of it for ourselves. If you show 'good faith,' we'll share it with you."

By "good faith" they mean for the unsuspecting victim to put up some of his or her own money (which they promise to return, but don't). So the couple goes to the bank with their victim who makes a sizeable withdrawal and gives it to them. The victim is then told to wait, say, "on the corner," with a paper bag, until they return with his/her share of the "lost" money. But they never return! Often, victims are so chagrined that they never report the crime.

Talk to knowledgeable friends, not strangers, about any financial venture. In these days of low interest rates, senior adults often won-

der if they should cash in their CDs for a better investment. Sound investments are out there, but avoid anything that "sounds too good to be true." Not every "contractor" can fix a leaky roof!

Don't be afraid to solicit advice from reliable people who'll be in business long after the "pigeon drop" artist has skipped town in search of other victims.

Baptist Record

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